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The Waukegan lakefront clean-up is getting a boost from the federal stimulus package after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced \$10 to \$25 million is available to finish the clean-up of Plant 2 at the Outboard Marine Corp.

"This is huge," said Susie Schreiber, chairman of the Waukegan Harbor Citizens Advisory Group. "This is one more piece of the financial pie."

"This will position Waukegan to finally move forward with the final clean-up of the harbor," she said, which is a separate issue. With this clean-up of Plant 2 out of the way, the harbor clean-up can move up on the funding list.

"This will lead to getting de-listed as a Great Lakes Area of Concern," she said.

The former outboard motor manufacturing facility is one of four clean-up projects that make up the OMC site, which is a 60-acre parcel that contains an abandoned 1,060,000-square-foot industrial building that is now owned by the city of Waukegan.

The EPA said the money is being made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for the demolition of the buildings contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

Besides the building materials, the site will be excavated and all the PCB-containing material will be disposed of off-site, which is required because of a 2007 clean-up decision document.

The EPA said it would recycle as much of the steel and cement as possible. With the demolition of the building, the city can move forward with its plans to redevelop site.

In the summer of 2006, demolition took place on three former OMC buildings that were determined to be environmentally clean -- the trim and die-cast structures, and the former corporate headquarters at 100 Seahorse Drive.

The remaining buildings were left standing because they housed old manufacturing plants where PCBs were used in the hydraulic and lubricating oils for the production lines. The toxins were routinely discharged into holding ponds and lagoons, and some was flushed down sewer lines.

The city's master plan for downtown and lakefront development calls for both residential use and an "eco-park" on the former OMC property once it is environmentally clean.

Officials weigh in on lakefront clean-up

"We had hoped this money was coming," said Congressman Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park. "It's a good inaugural present for mayor-elect Sabonjian. We'll be on our way to an economic miracle like we've seen in Kenosha," said Kirk, referring to how only the harbor clean-up is unfunded.

"I am pleased that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act we passed in February is already working to provide vital funding for environmental cleanup projects right here in Waukegan," said Senator Roland Burris. "These grants give a green light to important projects that will not only improve the environment of Waukegan, but will put local people back to work, and stimulate the regional economy," he said.

"EPA has an answer to these challenging economic times," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "Under the Recovery Act, we're getting harmful pollutants and dangerous chemicals out of these communities and putting jobs and investment back in."

"The infusion of extra cleanup money will provide real dividends to the community with a cleaner environment and good-paying jobs," said Bharat Mathur, acting regional administrator.

This Recovery Act funding is part of the \$600 million that Congress appropriated to the Federal Superfund remedial program.

"When you have PCBs in the Outboard Marine building, with the rainwater and everything else, it just flows back into the harbor ... All we've got to do is take down that building and (the property) will be ready for development," said Waukegan Mayor Dick Hyde.